Refutation

Goals: Learn the common process to go against any argument.

Learn how to apply that knowledge concretely in rounds to win more often.

Every argument is incorrect and terrible; every argument is wrong and really bad. You won’t be intimidated by arguments, and you’ll have the confidence to answer back arguments. Also, no matter how good your own argument is, you must believe in it completely. While you can know the limits of the arguments, you can sell the arguments without doubt.

First, your ability to answer an argument is dependent on the confidence to answer an argument. Trust your instincts, and intuition pays out.

Second, an argument’s strength is highly determined by confidence and persuasion. The judge’s ability to understand the argument will become clearer as well.

Third, a debater’s confidence often affects their opponent’s confidence.

Caveats and warnings: First, knowing your right doesn’t justify acting like an asshole. Second, you must still take arguments seriously and prove your correctness to the judge. Third, don’t assume the judges recognize your awesomeness.

Offensive arguments:

Turns: Impact turns (what they say is good is actually bad or vice versa). Link turns (I lead into more benefits or less harms than they do). Straight turn (denial of link and uniqueness).

Disadvantages: Traditional (uniqueness – why isn’t happening in the negative, external link – links the disad to the AC, internal link – links AC to bad impact). Linear disadvantage (happening on both sides of the flow, but Affirming makes much worse). Brink (bad things are happening now, but Affirming pushes it over the line, so it becomes worse OR nothing bad is happening but Affirming pushes us past the brink to make something happen).

Counterplan: Some form of alternative action to the Affirmative plan because it shows the policy is preferable

Kritik: A linear disadvantage that criticizes an assumption of the AC and offers an alternative.

Theory: Claiming something the opponent is doing in a round is illegitimate and should result in a loss.

Defensive arguments:

Mitigation: Opponent still getting arguments, but only to a lesser degree.

Terminal defense: 100% defense. What they’re saying is wrong.

Link denial: Denies connection between an argument and a standard.

Refutation should mix offense and defense, but you should prioritize offense. More cards are always better. Empirical claims, statistics, correlations and causations, and psychological claims all need external evidence to verify the claim. Even arguments that could be made analytically should be carded.

The Process of Refutation:

The first step is to understand the argument. What is its substance? What is its functionality? Change the way you flow. Don’t flow what you hear. Listen and comprehend, then write down in your own words. Also, flow the function of a card. Second, determine which arguments are important to answer. Look to generate offense on your opponent’s case. Start with your opponent’s impact: What are other ways we could create this impact or avoid the impact aside from the AC? How can the link to the impact function in the opposite direction? How can I flip the impact’s importance? Then, look at the internal link stories and determine whether links create unmentioned impacts. If you can’t generate any other offense, go to the framework and throw in generic arguments that could link to the standard, even if they aren’t substantive to the Affirmative Case. Make sure to not delink arguments that you’ve link turned.

Next, go to the link story and take out the lynchpins. Then, mitigate by questioning the probability of scenarios. For each step of a composite catastrophe; each step along the way diminishes the probability the impact will occur. There are even cards about this phenomenon (Apocalypse When by Steven Dolly. Also look up cards by Sass Sunstein.). As a last ditch effort, throw out as much mitigation as possible. Mitigation must be used with proper weighing.

Then, head to the framework. Determine your strategy for the framework only after you determine your strategy for the case. Make sure framework arguments don’t contradict your responses to contentions. The first way to answer framework is to prioritize substance to procedure. Then, explain the interaction of frameworks and why to prefer yours. Try to think of the framework and how it could justify wrong decisions in other situations. For the next way to answer, you must recognize the two types of criteria: one says which arguments that are relevant to the round. First, are certain impacts excluded that should be included? Second, are certain impacts included that should be excluded? The second kind of criteria create impacts. For example, dehumanization may justify genocide, but walking through airport security is dehumanizing yet avoids justifying genocide. Also, make sure to weigh a standard’s contribution to an impact.

Strategies while running out of time:

It is okay to drop arguments so long as you are weighing against it effectively. Remember, risk is magnitude, probability, and timeframe – not just magnitude. Also, you can weigh by how strong the links to a story are. Before the round, make sure that you have a plan on how to weigh your arguments. Prepping out common positions on the other side can be key to weighing your evidence well.

Grouping allows you to find arguments that rely on common assumptions and then question those assumptions. Explain that beating the assumption takes out multiple arguments. You can do this, too, for link stories by taking out one link that leads to multiple impacts.

Answering what you do not understand:

Don’t panic. All arguments are bad. Next, these arguments are like all others: they still rely on logic and chains, so find those and break them down. Then, use cross examination and prep time to pin your opponent down to a simple summary. Also, don’t be afraid of sounding dumb. The judges sympathize with you because they don’t like really confusing cases. Further, if you can understand the argument’s functionality, you can the weakspots and open it up to attack. Next, don’t get bogged down answering the argument. Don’t make their case the primary issue of the debate: focus on your case. Then, after extending your offense, outweigh their confusing position. Judges don’t want you to run theory: they want you to beat the bad argument logically. If you must run theory, figure out why the argument annoys you, which gives you the basis of theory. What are the case’s implications of the larger debate?

Answering a priori’s: First, a priori’s do not exist. All arguments in debate rounds must link to a standard. Second, question the standard and assumptions on which it relies and then explain why those are false.